

From: Brian McGovern <btmcgovern@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 14, 2013 9:59 PM
To: AppropriationTestimony
Subject: Testimony on behalf of Inclusion Teaming

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

In my current position with the Connecticut Judicial Branch, I meet and speak with many different clients from all walks of life. One client in particular, a 51 year-old male, really struck a chord with me and here is why:

As the man told me his story about growing up with Asperger's Disorder, it really struck a chord with me. He went on to tell me about all of the struggles he has faced especially while growing up. He was labeled as "crazy", "mental", "out of control", "odd", "strange" and so on. He was diagnosed with numerous mental disorders and felt completely isolated. Of course, this gentleman grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, and at this point, people were not discussing Asperger's Disorder. This man felt completely alone and isolated from society despite the fact that he had an absolutely brilliant mind.

Fast forward to present and this man is able to hold a very part-time job working as a night school teacher. He still battles with feelings of not being accepted from his past but has earned the respect of his students and other teachers.

The reason I bring this story up is that it ties in with my work as program facilitator at Inclusion Teaming. This is an extremely unique idea that brings together students who are typical and non-typical communicators in one setting in which they are able to learn from each other. Traditional "social skills groups" in schools are keeping non-typical communicators with other non-typical communicators and a teacher who facilitates the group. While these groups mean well, they are not helping to bring together people with different communication styles.

I think about how this man's life might be different had he participated in a program such as Inclusion Teaming. He might have been able to hold a full-time job and even make a few new friends along the way. And what would typical communicators learn about this man: He is someone who is highly intelligent, motivated, and most importantly, has a caring heart.

Inclusion Teaming is all about changing perceptions. No longer is a non-typical communicator, "crazy", "weird", or "mental." Each non-typical communicator has name, a face, and most importantly feelings. Now is the time for students to come together and learn from each other in the same setting which is what makes Inclusion Teaming different than other programs.

I hope that you are able to support Inclusion Teaming. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
Brian McGovern, MSW